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## CHINESE CULTURE.

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WE are in the habit of calling the present an age of movement and progress. True, it is so, but with some important limitations. One half of the world, we may say, is astir in every new enterprise; but the other, slightly jostled by its commotion, is just beginning to awake from the slumber of ages. If we take the mean of the various estimates of the population of our globe, we shall find it to be not far from eight hundred millions. It is certainly remarkable that the half of this aggregate is now and has long been under one political organization, and that four hundred millions of men have the same literature, laws and institutions. We refer to the Chinese nation.

Hitherto, little has been known of this great portion of the human family. They have as it were been walled out from the common intercourse of man; and there in the remote East has been solved an unique problem in human history. Little, very little, has been done for ages to disturb the operation of those causes which have combined to make China what she is. Antipodal to us in her position on the globe, she is scarcely less so in many other particulars. She has taken no note of human progress elsewhere.

But we have fallen upon a new era in her history. The period has arrived when, as the earthquake darts a tremor from pole to pole, the advancing movements of the Occidental world begin to send their vibrations to the farthest East. God, it has been well said, often works by delays in the great scheme of his providence. It is but two centuries and a half since it was said in the chronicles of the times, that "Russia was discovered." Eleven years later, a divine hand planted the first colony of white men on these shores. Now again, after having suffered China to maintain an anomalous existence for thousands of years, the same power has

unlocked her gates, and opened her coast to the world. The old exclusive system of Tartar policy has not been broken up; but the beginning of a change has been made, and therein is contained the pledge of its completion at no very distant day. That selfish and unsocial political creed has received a shock from which it never can recover. The nation may fall in with the common movement of mankind towards a better state, but never can retrace its steps, so as to take its former lonely and stationary position. The Chinese people must come fully into the community of nations. The age of change has overtaken them, and they cannot wholly withstand it. Their language, their religion, and their social and political state, must hereafter be subjected to the influences that have so powerfully operated to modify or renovate those of other nations. To the Christian, the scholar, and the philanthropist, then, a new and vast sphere has been thrown open, wherein to exercise their kindly offices.

Our purpose at the present time is to notice some of the most efficient causes that have been long at work there, moulding and fashioning more especially the Chinese mind into its present shape and dimensions, and giving to every thing that belongs to it, good or bad, its present character. Pursuing this course, we may first take note of the geographical position of the Chinese empire. This has had much to do with the formation of the character of its inhabitants.

It is by no means an insignificant question in reference to any people, whether the bounds of their habitation are formed by a surrounding ocean, in whole or in part, or are altogether inland; whether they are heated by a tropical sun, or stiffened by polar cold, or subjected to such varieties of climate as are found in the temperate zone. When the Ruler of the universe assigned Eastern Asia to the Chinese, casting up mountain-barriers on the North, the West, and the South, with the ocean on the East, to form its natural boundaries, he had a purpose in it. Within that vast enclosure he was to develop a chapter in human history which owes its leading features in no small degree to its situation on the map of the globe. Its very remoteness from Europe and America has tended to leave that country unaffected by influences from abroad. Rome studied in the school of Greece, and the other Euro-

pean nations took lessons from Rome; but the Chinese have educated themselves at home. But the geographical boundaries of their country seem, still more than their remoteness, to have excluded them from the rest of the nations. They could hardly have been more isolated, if China had been girded on all sides by broad seas. The natural consequence of this seclusion was, that they maintained a separate existence, and had an independent growth, and a self-made character. No nation from beyond the present boundaries of the empire ever, till lately, invaded their territory. They felt no foreign power, and hence learned to fear and respect none. They depended upon none but themselves, and so learned to rely upon their own resources. While the nations of Western Asia and Europe were impinging upon each other, in hostile collisions, or in the peaceful interchange of the products of the earth and the mind, or more than all perhaps through the working of the potent leaven of Christianity diffused among them, the subjects of the Chinese monarchy scarcely heeded their existence, much less the changes through which they passed. Political revolutions abroad produced no effect upon them, as they scarcely had dealings with their nearest neighbors. This was the effect of their geographical position. In addition to this, the generally favorable climate, the general fertility of the soil, the various and abundant national resources, and the facility of intercommunication between the most distant parts of the country, afforded by means of rivers, (a facility which has been greatly increased by art,) are physical causes that have always tended to make the Chinese contented in their own land, and to check emigration. Industry is not discouraged there, as it is in the Arctic regions; nor is indolence begotten by extreme fertility, as in tropical climes; but there has always been at once necessity to provoke labor, and production to reward it. This may also, in some measure, account for the early advancement of China in civilization. It was a region peculiarly favorable to the development of industry, and men were left alone there, so far as foreign war is concerned, to try in peace their physical, moral and intellectual powers; and that with a strong impulse, from their national seclusion, to exercise their inventive faculties. Hence, when the rest of the world was comparatively in a state of barbarism,

China was perhaps in advance of all other countries in respect to the arts and comforts of civilized life.

Such in general has been her position in reference to the other great families of man, for many centuries. It matters little that the existence of this people was known to the Western nations, at an early period. Until recently, every attempt to promote a more intimate and frequent intercourse with China has failed. Of all the foreign powers that made the experiment, during centuries, none but Russia, whose Siberian dominions are adjacent to the Chinese empire, could ever effect a treaty with the great monarch of the East, or cause him to regard an envoy in any other light than that of a tribute-bearer. On the other hand, China never sent a political ambassador to any foreign court or government whatever, if we except that to the Khan of the Tunguse Tartars. There has she stood among the kingdoms of the earth, almost as regardless of the rest as if she were the only power in the world. Without taking into view the facts which have been referred to, it would be difficult, not to say impossible, to account for such an anomaly in the history of the world. It is manifest that distance and seclusion from other nations have contributed to give the Chinese the unique character which they retain to this day. Whatever that character might be, it was necessarily after its own kind, it was *sui generis*.

Another important clue to the right apprehension of a nation's character, is its language. The Chinese language is so singular, in the phenomena of its structure, as to entitle it to the attention of intelligent persons as a part of the history of the human mind. But it has higher claims to notice, because it is the medium through which four hundred millions of mankind, occupying a territory more extensive than all Europe, communicate their ideas. Its high antiquity is unquestionable. There are reasons independent of Chinese testimony, or Chinese chronology, for believing it to be one of the oldest languages of the Confusion. The human mind is essentially the same in all countries. Hence we look for some resemblances in those creations of the mind which are intended for the same, or similar purposes. Accordingly we find, in the arts, substantially the same kind of tools used by men of the same craft, in France and India, in China and America. But language is the instrument

which the mind universally employs as the medium of intercourse between man and man, and we might expect to find, if not an universal language, at least as many analogies and resemblances between the vehicles of thought in use among different nations, as we do between their implements of art. This natural expectation is in a good degree realized in the languages of Europe. The alphabets of many of them, and to a considerable extent their words, are identical, or at least traceable to a common origin. But when one lands upon the shores of China, he feels that he is, emphatically, among a people of a strange tongue. Every word he perceives to be a monosyllable, a peculiarity not found in any other tongue except the Cochin-Chinese, which is evidently kindred to the Chinese. In order to be intelligible to one another, the Chinese throw synonymous words together, and thus form compound words; but yet, strictly speaking, all their words are monosyllabic. The stranger observes also a peculiar indistinctness of articulation, as if consonants were of little account, and an unusually frequent repetition of the same sound, apparently of the same word, which is not altogether attributable to his ignorance of the language. He hears a strongly marked rising inflection of voice at the end of a sentence, and supposes that it indicates a question. But he is told that this is no sign of an interrogation; it is a tone that belongs to the word, and is always given to it, whenever and in whatever connection it is uttered. He thinks again that he hears an assertion; but his interpreter informs him that the supposed affirmative tone was an expression of doubt. The modulations of voice which he takes to be indicative of emotion in the speaker, have not the remotest association with it. On the contrary, he must dispossess himself of one of the very instincts of his nature, and when he listens to a Chinese, must dissociate his tones of voice from any and every state of feeling in the speaker, because his intonations have not the office of expression, as in other languages. They are only an expedient to increase the number of distinct words in the language. Every word has one of these tones belonging to it, which is as inseparable from it as the other vocal elements of which it is composed. The paucity of words distinguishable from one another by the ear, is such that it has been found necessary to vary

them by means of four tones, in order to increase the number.

In Morrison's Dictionary, we find twelve thousand six hundred and seventy-four characters, having forms and meanings distinct from each other. But in representing them all by Roman letters, the author produced only four hundred and eleven different syllables. These, if accentuated by four tones, would give a little more than one thousand six hundred distinguishable enunciations for all the words in the court-dialect, that is, for all the twelve thousand six hundred and seventy-four contained in the Dictionary to which reference has been made. Thus we have an average of eight words, spelt and pronounced exactly alike, for every sound in the one thousand six hundred.

But the Chinese do not avail themselves of all the advantage afforded by their tonic system, and in fact there are only about one thousand different sounds in use. Yet what are one thousand words to the wants of man? How great must be the difficulty of communicating any but the most common ideas, by means of speech, and how much room must there be for mistake and confusion in the use of such a language! There are of course many words perfectly homophonous, but unlike in signification. For example, there are in Morrison's Dictionary two hundred and twelve characters each of which is pronounced *che*; one hundred and thirteen pronounced *ching*; one hundred and thirty-eight pronounced *foo*; one hundred and sixty-five pronounced *chih*; and no less than one thousand one hundred and sixty-five which are all read *e*. Now when the written representatives of these words are before the eye, they are readily distinguished by their forms, for there are no two alike. But when one hears the word *che* spoken, the question arises: Which of the two hundred and twelve *ches* is it? If it is *e* that he hears, how shall he identify it among the one thousand one hundred and sixty-five characters so pronounced? The difficulty is partially obviated by joining two synonyms that differ in sound, so that the hearer, if uncertain as to the meaning of one, may possibly recognize that of the other. At other times, the Chinese form a set phrase out of two or three words which become associated by usage, much like the parts of a compound word in English, so that one suggests the other, and at the same time explains it.

But after all there is a defect in the language, and none of the expedients devised for its remedy have been successful. The defect is a radical one, and lies in its monosyllabic basis. The stock of monosyllables was exhausted long before the demands of the language had been met. As more words were required, they were first supplied by applying tones to those already in use; and when this source of increase failed, there remained to the Chinese mind no other expedient but to repeat the words already in existence for the remaining purposes of speech. It is this feature of the language, more than any other, that renders it so difficult to be acquired by an adult foreigner. Men who have resided in China fifteen or twenty years, for the purposes of trade, generally leave the country as unable to speak it as they were on the day they landed there.

The peculiarities above-mentioned do not exist, to the writer's knowledge, any where else, except in the Anamitic, or Cochin-Chinese language, where all the words are monosyllables, for writing which the Chinese character is used, and where a system of tones is also employed. The Anamitic is however a cognate dialect, bearing much the same relation to the Chinese, as the Chaldee does to the Hebrew. The monosyllabic and tonic character of the words in both is a more certain index of their common origin than the identity of their mode of representing them to the eye. This character of its words marks the Chinese language as having had a growth, if not an origin, separate from others. It would seem as if the Chinese nation had in the remotest antiquity sequestered itself from the rest of mankind, and adopted a system of speech purposely fitted, or at least certain, to confine their own ideas within a narrow compass, and to prevent their expansion by intercourse with others. Such have been the results of the system, whatever the design may have been. What else but a cramped and stunted growth and development of mind, like that of their own much admired dwarf-trees in flower-pots, could result from the use of such a medium of intercourse among them? Starting with and tenaciously adhering to a monosyllabic structure of words, they found it impossible to multiply them beyond one or two thousand; and when the restless mind sought to go beyond the length of this short tether, in giving expression to its conceptions and emotions, it was



compelled to resign itself to its fate, and sink back into listlessness and inactivity, or to move round and round in the same circle, with that chain as its constant radius. No wonder that, in such circumstances, the minds of men have become tame and inane, that thought has lost its freshness, vigor and originality, and that China presents to us that which, in intellectual respects, more resembles a catacomb of mummies than a nation of living men.

The Chinese language is not only peculiar in these respects, but unsocial in its very genius. The tones of the human voice, that elsewhere perform the high office of expression, conveying from mind to mind most intelligible signs of the emotions of the speaker, are in China strangely forbidden to subserve this purpose, and limited to the mere multiplication of words. It follows, then, that there are slender means of indicating by the voice, either the tender or the severe, the joyous or the sad,—that there is little room, in short, for pathos in the language. Hence oratory is unknown in China.

Every one who is at all familiar with the Chinese mind, is aware that one of its most prominent characteristics is, not indolence, but a sort of stoicism or insensibility. Tell a Chinese a joke, and he will smile; tell him a tale of suffering, and there are ten chances to one that he will do the same. Let him see a fellow creature in peril of his life, and it is by no means certain that he will rush to his rescue. The good Samaritan is seldom represented by a Chinese. One of the suite attached to Lord Macartney's embassy to Peking, relates that while they were on the Grand Canal, a boat's crew were by some accident precipitated into the water, and in imminent danger of drowning; but no effort was made by the bystanders to rescue them from their perilous situation, though one individual was noticed in the act of trying to save a hat that was floating upon the water. The writer once saw a vessel capsized in the harbor of Hongkong, in full view of hundreds of boatmen, and had occasion to observe that it was a painfully long time before any of them pulled off from the shore to rescue their countrymen from drowning.

There are few subjects on which the Chinese appear to be as readily excitable, or capable of as strong emotion, as the people of the West, or even those of Central or South-

ern Asia. Now this national characteristic is not to be attributed to any one cause alone; but is it not reasonable to suppose that the peculiarity of their language, to which we have just adverted, has had some influence in producing it? If a muscle or limb be long restrained from free exercise, it loses its power. Will not the mind also, if not permitted to express its emotions in the natural way, gradually become torpid and insensible? The feelings being cramped and confined, for want of a medium of utterance, diminish in intensity, in proportion as this law of restraint is imposed upon them. If they be denied the use of the tones of the human voice, they have no instruments of expression left, but the countenance, gesticulation, and attitude. They are deprived of that which is the best of all, because it was designed for this end, and hence relapse into habitual stupor. There is much reason to believe that this is one part of the process by which the Chinese mind has become so difficult to be rallied into a glow of strong excitement. If the people made their language, it is not the less true that the language has made the people.

What has been said thus far, relates to the language as it is spoken. It remains to give some account of the written character. The invention of letters is ascribed, by Chinese historians, to Tsang Keë, who lived four thousand five hundred and ten years ago. This is doubtless an extravagant assumption. Still, their origin must have been very ancient. There are odes now extant, which were composed, it is said, by two individuals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries before Christ. Several instances also occur in the previous history of the country, in which written messages were sent, and events recorded. The posthumous titles of emperors were engraven on stone tablets, and placed in temples, as early as B. C. 1122. It may perhaps be safely inferred that the art of writing was known in the country as early as the thirteenth century before our era.

The Chinese seem to have begun to write by making pictures of familiar objects, such as the sun, moon, man, etc. to represent to the eye, or rather to recall to the mind, through the eye, the names by which those objects were already known. Thus a circle with a dot stood for the word *yih*, or the sun; a crescent, for the word *yuë*, or the moon; and so on. It is manifest from the inspection of these sym-

bols, that they furnish no means by which a person unacquainted with the Chinese names to be attached to them, could ascertain their proper reading. They would rarely suggest to a stranger the names by which he had been taught to designate the objects which they represent. None but a Chinese would call the one *yih*, and the other *yuë*. In other words, there is no spelling by which the name of the symbol can be ascertained.

This pictorial system of writing could not, in the nature of things, be carried to any great extent. It was too complicated and cumbersome, beside being poorly adapted to express abstract ideas. It would be difficult to depict the idea of softness, or hardness, justice, or mercy, and numerous other things that have no visible forms, so as to make the representations available for the purposes of writing. The consequence was, that this mode of writing was early superseded by another. A Chinese writer on this subject says that the whole number of these pictorial symbols amounted to two thousand four hundred and twenty-five. The next step was to combine these primitive symbols in such a way as to represent sounds. The mode of doing this appears to have been, to select some one of the existing characters, of precisely the same sound as the word or name for the object about to be represented in writing, and to join it to another character expressive of the most prominent feature of that object. For example, the word *ho* is composed of two characters, *ho* and *shwuy*; the first is an auxiliary particle denoting may, might, can, could, and the second represents water. That is, the name for a river having the sound *ho*, the character *ho* was taken as indicative of the pronunciation, and the character *shwuy* to give a clue to the meaning, and both together formed the new character *ho*, which is the written word for a river.

This is the nearest approach which the Chinese have made to a phonetic system of writing. By committing to memory some two thousand of the primitive symbols, a person might have a tolerably safe guide to the pronunciation of three-fourths of the words in the language. But as to the remainder, there is no means of deciding what their pronunciation may be. For example, the word *ming* signifies bright, or brightness, or is equivalent to the Latin *illustrare*. The left part of the character is *yih*, or the sun,

and the right is *yuë*, or the moon. But the two together are neither pronounced *yih*, nor *yuë*, but *ming*. The word *ho*, written differently from *ho* a river, is compounded of two others, of which one is *neu*, a woman, and the other, *tsz'*, a child, and both together form *ho*, an adjective signifying good. The word *e* is compounded of *yang*, a sheep, and *ngo*, the personal pronoun I, and the combination of the two means justice, which is pronounced *e*. These examples will suffice to illustrate the point. Practically, the whole body of written words in the language are, to the Chinese, like these last mentioned, for they neither learn nor teach the art of reading by means of the phonetics. Indeed it is probably true, that few of the educated Chinese know any thing about them. In the course of eight years' residence among them, and while employing various native teachers to assist him in the study of the Chinese, the writer never met with one who was aware that this feature existed in the written character. The phonetic method of writing was apparently introduced so late, and in so peculiar a way, that nearly all the benefit of it is lost. It would have been almost as well, had people proceeded as they began, and invented a separate arbitrary symbol for every word in the language. In all other parts of the world, men seem to have been impelled as by a common instinct, or necessity, to adopt either an alphabetic or syllabic mode of writing. In this way, the process of learning to read has been rendered simple and easy. It is only necessary to learn the powers and forms of a few letters, or a short list of syllables, (as in the case of the Japanese, or the Corean,) and one is furnished with a key to the pronunciation of every word in the language.

The Chinese, on the contrary, have neither alphabet nor syllabary, or, if we may so express it, they have as many letters in their alphabet as they have words in their language. There are few things in which this people have not the merit of being original, and in the matter now under discussion none will be disposed to call in question their originality. Suppose that the English language had at first consisted of only twenty-six words, and that these words had been represented in writing by the letters of our alphabet, *a* standing for one word, and *b* for another, and so on. We should then have a miniature representation of the

Chinese system of writing. But suppose, again, that our language had increased its stock of words to the number of fifty thousand, or eighty thousand, and that as words were multiplied, new letters were added to the original twenty-six, (a letter for each word, as at first,) until the number of letters also became fifty thousand, or eighty thousand. To learn to read such a language would have been a very different thing from what it now is to read English. Now, although the analogy between this and the Chinese mode of writing does not hold good in all respects, as has been shown in the foregoing remarks on phonetics, still, so far as the practical effect upon the increase, acquisition and communication of knowledge is concerned, it does. Long as the Chinese have insisted upon the importance of education to the well-being of a people, they have never availed themselves of even the partial aid in simplifying the process of learning to read, which the phonetic characters hold out to them. The scholar in their schools has always been obliged to go through the laborious drudgery of learning the form, pronunciation, and meaning of each character by itself, as really as if there had been no affinities whatever between their written elements, just as a child among us learns the letters of the alphabet.

Was there ever a more ingenious contrivance for making the process of learning difficult? Who could devise a fitter scheme to make the road to knowledge long and tiresome? With us, the child is but a few weeks, or months, in learning to use the "wings of thought," while the son of Han spends a life time in learning to fly. He is, he is compelled to be, an abecedarian as long as he lives. Thus again is the Chinese mind hampered. How can it be otherwise, with such a task to perform? It is occupied, through the best part of life, with the effort to retain the mere names of arbitrary symbols. The memory is the only faculty that is exercised, and even that is very much limited in its action, being doomed to be the mere repository of words.

The written language has undergone some changes in the lapse of ages. Words have increased in number. Some have become obsolete, and others have changed their signification. The ancient and modern forms of characters also differ from each other. But by reason of the small number of distinct sounds in the language, and for want of an alpha-

bet, it has a singular inaptness to multiply words. In the Imperial Dictionary of Kanghí, there are forty-four thousand four hundred and forty-nine words. To learn all these were surely enough for any man. He would be a clever child who should master the half of them in the time usually allotted to learning to read. Here then is a strong objection to increasing the number of characters. There are enough already to occupy years of study. Again, it is as difficult to introduce foreign words into the language as it is to smuggle a foreigner into the interior of the empire. Whether the word to be introduced be spoken or written, it becomes so miserably disfigured by the operation, that its most familiar acquaintances can hardly recognize it, or divine its meaning. Take a foreign name, for instance. There are ten chances to one that the Chinese are unable to imitate its pronunciation. If it be a word of more than one syllable, the Chinese cannot pronounce it, unless among the one thousand monosyllables which they use, there be an enunciation corresponding to each of the syllables in the foreign word. In multitudes of cases there is no such homophony of Chinese words with the syllables of words from other languages. In order to write the foreign word *à la Chinoise*, the writer selects as many Chinese characters as the word has syllables, and writes them one after the other, like the other words in a sentence, but without any mark to indicate to the reader that they are to be connected so as to form a foreign word. They appear, on the contrary, to be distinct words in the sentence, like all the rest, while in fact they are used merely for their sound, without any reference to their signification. If the imitation were, or could be, generally good in respect to sound, there would be less to complain of in this mode of introducing foreign words. But a few examples of proper names, taken at random, will show how wretchedly they become travestied by the transfer. America, in the dialect of Canton, becomes *Mi lí ko*; France is *Fat lán sai*; England is *Ying kat lí kwok*; and Russia is metamorphosed into *Ngó ló sz' kwok*. These will suffice for our purpose. It is evident that the Chinese language has the least possible affinity for any other. A thorn-bush will receive a scion from the pear, but this language is a tree that almost wholly refuses to be grafted. It is strange, indeed, that a great nation should have adopted

a system of speech and writing so hostile to every other; that so large a part of the human family should have hit upon such an expedient to resist all attempts at the increase of knowledge from abroad. But so it is. The Chinese orthography is fit only for an exclusive people.

Nor do the Chinese seem much more inclined to coin words, than they are to admit other innovations. Authorized new words rarely come into use. Now and then, some official dignitary, or literary man, devises a new combination of existing elements, or of pencil-strokes; but such cases are rare. While numberless spoken words spring up in the dialects of the country, more especially in those parts where foreign intercourse has rendered them necessary, still the dictionaries seldom contain them. A late Lieutenant Governor of Canton once issued an edict respecting the locusts that were ravaging the rice-fields; and having occasion to speak of the insect in its chrysalis state, he found no written term for it, and therefore invented one. Frequent inquiries have been made for words of recent origin in that language, and so far as the writer's observation extends, not more than half a dozen have been discovered. It is almost needless to add, that the system of writing of which we have been speaking, has greatly trammelled the mind of that people. Together with the other causes that have been mentioned, this has confined thought to a very limited range, and discouraged progression beyond certain fixed boundaries.

It is true that Chinese literature is ample in quantity, and variety. It comprises works on language, statistics, topography, biography, poetry, natural history, ethics, astronomy, arts, manners and customs; also antiquarian researches, governmental edicts, or state-documents; and works on jurisprudence, rites and ceremonies, medicine, geography, Buddhism, and other religious systems, works of fiction, and books for juvenile readers. Such are the headings taken from the catalogue of a Chinese library. But this enumeration gives one no correct idea of the character of these works. The history is chiefly that of China, with some references to Arabia, India, and Russia. The biography is that of eminent men and women of that country, and of geniï. The ethics are those of the ancient sages, of whom Confucius is the chief. The natural history consists of the popular names of

plants and animals, with the habits and uses of the same, and all arranged without any scientific system. The geography, until 1840,\* was that of China and its dependencies. The works on medicine tell us of the wonderful facility with which the Chinese faculty come to the diagnosis of a disease by solemnly feeling the pulse at the wrist, in six different places, or at the upper, lower, or middle joint of this or that finger, upon the right or left hand; and prescribe, it may be, dog's flesh for this, or cat's flesh for that ailment; recommend tiger's bones for the weakly, or describe the amazing curative properties of the slightly tonic weed called *ginseng*. The works of fiction are full of such details as we might expect from the corrupt state of society in all pagan lands.

"The stubborn belief of the Chinese in the authenticity of the records of antiquity," says Mr. Thom, late British Consul at Ningpo, "has given a peculiar character to the whole literature of the country. It has taught all modern writers to quote the assertions of their predecessors as axioms, and to avoid the trouble either of thinking upon a subject, or of reasoning about the justness of a remark. The ancient authors, in imitation of Confucius, boldly assumed the high ground of dictation, and seem to have written whatever came into their minds. If any one will take the trouble to look into the celebrated writings of their *Shih Tsz'*, or ten philosophers, (Greece had only seven,) he will soon convince himself that these men put sound sense and logic at defiance, mix fable and truth, take direct nonsense and practical wisdom in the same breath, and leave the reader to doubt, whether, when writing, they had been sober or not. Even Confucius, much admired as he is, and justly too, is not altogether free from this fault." To these remarks it may be added, that the views of Chinese authors, like their personal observation, have scarcely extended beyond

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\* In 1840, the celebrated Commissioner Lin procured a copy of Murray's *Cyclopedia* from the writer, and employed his private secretary, a Chinese youth who had learnt English from an American missionary, to translate portions of it into Chinese. After Lin's banishment to Ele, he published these translations in two volumes octavo.

Since then, and within a year past, a Lieutenant Governor of Fokien province has published an original work on the geography of foreign, particularly European and American countries. See *Missionary Herald*, vol. xlv. p. 217.



the bounds of their own country; and whatever may be the theme on which they discourse, their opinions and reasonings are circumscribed by the same limits, as well as still more contracted from the nature of the language in which they write. Beside certain books published by some of the early Jesuit missionaries, and a few by Protestant missionaries, it may be questioned whether the Chinese have any books that would be considered scientific in the West, or that treat of subjects in a philosophical way.

The Chinese being shut up within their own borders, and having been furnished with, or having invented for themselves, a most awkward and impracticable system of writing, the consequence is that the spirit of inquiry has been repressed, thought confined to a prescribed course, and the people, like their language, have long ago reached the highest point of improvement to which the elements of their civilization could carry them. In some of the arts, they have long excelled. Their porcelain and silks, their lacquered and carved work, together with other articles of their cultivation or manufacture, still find a ready market in Christendom. Allusions to the polarity of the needle are met with in accounts of the traditionary period of their history, B. C. 2600. A more credible account of the discovery refers it to the year B. C. 1114. There is sufficient evidence that they possessed this knowledge earlier than the people of Europe. Mention is made of gunpowder in a work written in the fourth century, and the art of printing was known nine hundred years ago. All these facts are so many proofs of the natural superiority of the Chinese to the other Eastern Asiatics. They argue a higher degree of mental activity, industry and skill. Indeed, when we consider the difficulties with which they have had to contend, these facts show that the nation is not destitute of those intellectual qualities which, under proper direction, would render them truly great and powerful. When a people under these circumstances, so fitted to prevent their progress, has notwithstanding advanced so much farther than its neighbors in civilization, wealth, and power, we may be sure that it possesses the material of excellence in no small measure. China therefore presents a sphere for philanthropic labor that is full of hope as well as of destitution.

But the very errors of the human mind form an important part of its history. We must not fail, therefore, to notice the different religious or philosophical persuasions between which the vast population of China has been divided.

It has been a very general opinion, at least in modern times, that the whole human race was once in a state of savage rudeness; and that the progress of every nation has been from a beginning in primeval barbarism. But if we may place any reliance upon traditionary and monumental evidence, it was not so with the Egyptians, the Hindus, the Toltecs, the Peruvians, and the Chinese. Of the last it may be said, that according to their own tradition, far back in unexplored antiquity, their princes were almost divine, and the social and moral character of the people proportionally elevated. But long ages of decline have rolled away since that period, and the progress of corruption and degeneracy has kept pace with them. Following the same guide, we may safely affirm that the nation in its infancy was in a better religious condition than at present. The notion of a Supreme Being glimmers dimly through the doctrines of their ancient sages; an appeal to *Sháng-tí*, or the Supreme Ruler, was often made by individuals in distress; and the word *t'ien*, or heaven, is frequently used to express more than the azure firmament. From these and similar allusions to an intelligent overruling power, we may regard it as certain, that in the earliest times there was some knowledge of the true God among them. And why may they not have received it from their post-diluvian ancestors, among whom God was known by the catastrophe with which he had visited the earth? But whatever light they may have had, it was soon obscured and lost, amidst the growing superstitions of the people. It was not long before an indigenous idolatry sprang up and flourished there, which prevailed without any admixture from abroad till after the Christian era. Previous to that, however, Confucius, Láu-tsz', and Mencius had lived and died, bequeathing their legacies of philosophy and religion to posterity.

It was not till about thirty-three years after our Lord's crucifixion, that the Chinese engrafted any foreign religious system upon their native superstitions, or received any into competition with them. In the year of our Lord 65, or 66,

Buddhism first entered the country. The emperor Ming-tí is said to have been admonished in a dream, that “a *Holy One* was to be found in the West,” or, as the Chinese words might perhaps be better rendered, “they of the West have sages,” or “the Occidentals have a sage.” This dream is reported to have so much interested the monarch, that he sent a deputation westward, to search for the extraordinary personage thus denoted. The imperial envoys met the priests of Buddha in Hindustan, or Ceylon, who announced an incarnate god, put an end to the search for the Holy One of the West, and returned with the ambassadors to China. If this account be correct, the event took place so soon after the foundation of Christianity was laid by the death of Christ, that it naturally suggests the inquiry, whether some rumor of the Messiah’s advent had not travelled eastward from Judea, across Central Asia, until it reached the ears of the Chinese monarch. We have no means of deciding the question. But whatever may have been the occasion of this extraordinary mission, the result of it was that Buddhism sent its missionaries, under an imperial escort, into the country; which was destined to become the high place of its power and prevalence. Although it met with opposition, at first, from the Confucianists, who had already become the leading sect in the country, yet it maintained its ground to some extent; and in A. D. 310, an Indian priest who travelled into China, and gained the favor of one of the petty princes there, succeeded in propagating his religion, by means of pretended signs and miracles, beyond all precedent. Buddhism has been strongly opposed from time to time, by the adherents of other systems, but has never been expelled from the country. On the contrary, it has taken deep root, until at the present day, the empire is full of its temples, and swarms with its priests.

We shall not attempt any thing more than the merest summary of the leading dogmas and practices inculcated by the Buddhists. Any thing farther would be foreign to our present purpose.

Their priests profess to renounce all family connections, take a vow of celibacy, abstain from animal food, (at least in public,) and subsist on the voluntary contributions of the people, whether occasional, or in the form of endowments given to their temples, much in the manner of Romish friars.

As to the gods they worship, time would fail us to enumerate them, even if we knew them all. Accommodating their system to every existing superstition, they open the door to all sorts of converts, who may retain as many of their old persuasions as they please, provided they sacrifice to the gods, and bring offerings to the priests. On this account, and because reason, and not imagination, is the predominant mental characteristic of the Chinese, Buddhism has probably undergone extensive modifications, in consequence of being transported from India into China. It has not only received into its Pantheon new objects of worship, and left behind some of its original ones, but as to its rites and ceremonies it is a more decent religion than in the land of its birth. Chinese good sense has lopped off some of its most disgusting absurdities. A Singalese procession would put to the blush the Chinese sense of propriety.

It is not probable that the priests of Buddha understand their own religious faith much more than they do their prayers, for they are generally ignorant, and some of them are outlaws who have fled to the priesthood for fear lest justice should overtake them, and all of them pray in the Pali language. Their liturgy is written in the same unknown language, though not in the Pali character, but in the Chinese. Great merit is attached to the repetition of the name of Buddha. The Indian name Amita Buddha, as pronounced by them, is *O-mi-to-fut*; this repeated over and over again, constitutes a large part of their devotional exercises, while they keep a tally with their heads. Their most important canon of worship is, "Let not the rosary leave your hands, nor O-mi-to-fut depart from your lips."

In short, Buddha is a mysterious *nothing*. Hence the standard of perfection is a sublimation of existence above all qualities. Creation was a casualty, not designed by the Deity. Matter happened to emanate from nothing, and after passing through cycle after cycle of successive changes, will finally happen back again into nonentity. The soul of man, likewise, which originated from nothing by a mere accident, will transmigrate from one body to another, more or less elevated in the scale of being, according to its merits, and will ultimately be absorbed into the great Buddha. The highest heaven of the Buddhist's expectation is, not annihilation, but something so very like it, that it is scarcely

distinguishable from it. Perhaps it ought to be added, that according to the same creed, a woman can never enter heaven. She is taught that she is a woman because of sins in some former state of existence, and that she is now paying the penalty of that wickedness. She must, therefore, abandon all hope of heaven, until she shall have laid up in store merit sufficient to entitle her to another probation, in a different body from that which is now the tenement of her soul. It will be perceived that there is in all this no bond of obligation between man and his Maker, for he has no Creator.

Such is Buddhism, which, having in China engrafted upon itself many features of the indigenous idolatry, has together with Confucianism and Täuism pervaded the mass of the people. Mohammedanism exists in the country, but to so limited an extent, that it need not be more than mentioned.

The Burmese and Singalese assert that Buddha died in the year B. C. 543, and accordingly commence their era at that date. If the fact is so, the fifth and sixth centuries before Christ were remarkable for the leading minds to which they gave birth. Pythagoras, Plato, Buddha, and Confucius, all appeared on the stage of the world at nearly the same time. Greece, India, and China, each had its master spirit, who was to exercise a paramount influence over his own country, and to some extent over the world.

Confucius, or Kung-fü-tsz', as he is called by the Chinese, was born B. C. 550, in the Lú country, or what is now the province of Shantung. From a child, he is said to have been remarkably grave and sedate, mingling little in the sports of youth. His father being the chief minister of his native state, the son devoted himself exclusively to the study of moral and political science. He neither investigated the subjects of natural science, nor troubled himself about the superstitions of his countrymen. His doctrines therefore constitute rather a system of ethics and politics, blended together as mutual supports, than any particular religious creed. It was his chief aim to correct the vices that had crept into the state, and to restore the influence of those maxims that had been handed down from the early monarchs celebrated in Chinese history. He seems to have been an honest reformer, anxious only to propagate his princi-

ples of social order and virtue, without any ambitious views whatever. He had been promoted to a post in the government; but when he found that his counsels were not heeded, he abandoned it, and travelled through the country, devoting himself to the instruction of all who would receive him. Owing to the degeneracy of the princes of the times, he was far more successful among the people than in his labors at court. In process of time, he is said to have numbered three thousand disciples, of whom seventy-two became particularly distinguished. He was again called to fill high offices in the state, but finally retired to the company of his pupils, to study, and to compose, or compile, those celebrated works which have given him fame among posterity, and have become the sacred books of China.

The followers of Confucius have always been a numerous body, and have exerted a commanding influence in the state, though at times they have been strongly opposed by the Táuists or sectaries of Táu, Táu being the name by which the doctrines of Láu-tsz' are designated. Buddhism likewise has been the frequent antagonist of Confucianism. The disciples of Láu-tsz' and Buddha have been repeatedly admitted to an equal footing with the Confucianists at court, and in the functions of the government. But a review of the history of China shows plainly that, on the whole, Confucius has commanded the leading influence in the state, and that if we would discover the secret of the unique character of that people, we must look for it mainly in his teachings.

Some of the moral doctrines of this eastern sage have obtained the universal assent of mankind, and as rules of conduct of merely human origin, are unsurpassed in excellence. He taught almost the golden rule of our Saviour. We say almost, for Confucius goes no farther than to teach men not to do to others what they would not have others do to them. He also bade men guard their secret thoughts, as the springs of action. There is, however, much to condemn in his scheme of morals, as in every other which is merely human. He overstrains the duty of filial piety to such an absurd and mischievous extent as to enjoin it upon a son not to live under the same heavens with the slayer of his father. He also binds the son to his father, not only while the latter lives, but after he is dead, by making it the most

sacred duty of the son to worship annually, at the tombs of his ancestors, the spirits of the dead. This pushing to an extreme the paternal claim has been the favorite device of Chinese statesmen and rulers, ever since the time of Confucius, for the purpose of strengthening the authority of the emperor, whom the people have been taught to regard as their common father. The teachings of Confucius on this point have for ages formed the basis of their political system; and herein lies one great secret of the preservation of the Chinese empire. The sage gives to the father almost unlimited power and authority over the child, making unqualified obedience to all his commands the first duty to be inculcated upon the youthful mind, and limiting this subjection only by the life-time of the parent. So long as the father survives, a man cannot become of age in China. This is the theory, and so far as circumstances will allow, the aspect of things corresponds to it. But family government is the type of the imperial, and as thus maintained is well calculated to strengthen despotism. By thus granting to fathers absolute power over their children, the sagacious monarchs of China keep up in every family of the empire, at once an illustration and a sanction of their despotic claims. The ritual and penal codes maintain a constant parallel between the duties one owes to his parents and those he owes to the emperor. For like offenses against either, he suffers like penalties; at the death of either, he mourns and goes unshaven the same length of time; and both have nearly the same powers over his person. These things, it is true, do not indicate much personal liberty in the subject; but if obedience and order be the objects in view, the rulers of China have shown some knowledge of human nature, and proved that they know how to adapt means to an end.

It is not surprising that the empire should have undergone numerous revolutions; but it is singular that, through them all, the form of government has never been changed. Tyrants have been dethroned, but monarchy has never been discarded. It was never more true of any nation, that the condition of the family is the index of the state of society. This is the corner-stone of the system of Confucius, and by it he has shaped the destinies of the nation down to this day.

There have been twenty-six lines of monarchs in possession of the empire, and the whole number of sovereigns has been two-hundred and forty-four. In the year 1276, the Western or Mongol Tartars, under Koblai Khan, took the throne, and held it for eighty-eight years. In 1644, the Mantshus, the present rulers, took the reins of government into their hands. But though both the Mongols and Mantshus were Buddhists, they did not attempt to displace Confucius from his high position as the great teacher of the nation. On the contrary, they amalgamated his tenets with their own, and thus did homage to the Chinese sage. The reason is obvious. The maxims of Confucius are at once venerable for their antiquity, and admirably suited to consolidate the power of an autocrat. With them as premises, oriental logic, which does not stumble at an overstrained inference, can easily establish any conclusions that will suit its purposes. Hence no dynasty has found any difficulty in showing that the sceptre was placed in its hands by a decree of heaven. Proceeding thence, the sovereigns have called the people their children, and depicted their emotions towards them in patriarchal colors. The people, likewise, deceived by their appeals to the dogmas of Confucius, have called each emperor the Son of heaven, and the Ten-Thousand Years. He pays his adoration to heaven, and the people worship him.

But the master-stroke of Chinese policy is the system of popular education. We propose therefore to give a somewhat extended sketch of this. To omit it would be to leave out of view the most important element in the formation and perpetuation of the national character.

Paganism, in organized and powerful governments, is every whit as busy as Christianity in training its votaries. China could boast the existence of a system of common schools, overspreading the country, prior to the Christian era. So far was she in advance of all other countries in this respect, in that age of the world. In education, too, as in almost every thing else that is Chinese, we discover a remarkable uniformity and perpetuity of modes and results; for, again, it is as a teacher that Confucius is enshrined and deified. Every city, town and village of the empire, has its school or schools. There are few, if any, communities so poor that the schoolmaster does not find employment in



them. The reason is that learning, such as it is, is the road to office and preferment. Every father will therefore desire that at least one of his sons should be educated. If the young man is successful in passing the literary examinations, not only is he personally benefited by the honor and promotion that he gains, but his father and family share his reputation. To all alike, the rich and the poor, this way to eminence is open, none but the priest, the slave, and the play-actor, being excluded from the competition for literary honors. From the provinces, many a barber goes up, every three years, to the literary examinations for degrees, at the imperial or provincial capital, whom his poverty compels to practice his profession by the way, making the shears and razor defray the expenses of his journey. Nor is he the less respected for that. The government offers such a bounty on learning that ignorance is a greater disgrace than poverty. Education is held in such high esteem among the Chinese as might well provoke the imitation of other nations. The system works well in this respect; and were the means and results of education equally admirable, it need not be disturbed. Names, however, sometimes change their significations as they are used in different latitudes and longitudes. Let us, then, see what education means in China.

In the first place, the school-books of that country are the same throughout the empire. They have not been changed for two thousand years. They are the writings of Confucius and his disciples, who lived before the Christian era. Commentators have labored to elucidate the text of these books; but though men of more modern times than their authors, and displaying much ingenuity and learning, they have never been able to adapt them to the use of the young. Their style is antique, concise, elliptical, and obscure in the extreme. The subjects of which they treat, are the politico-moral principles which Confucius and his proselytes made the themes of their discourse to princes and statesmen; and they contain the poetry of times beyond the reach of written history.

The first book put into the hands of a child in China, at the age of six or eight years, is the *San-tsz'-king*, or Trime-trical Classic, a poetical work in which each verse consists of three words, or monosyllables. The very structure of it,

although it was made for a horn-book, were enough to condemn it, according to our notions. Though it were prose, it could not but be unintelligible to a child, every or nearly every sentence being composed of but three words. But let us observe the tenor of a few verses at the beginning of the book, and we may the better judge of its fitness, as a means of instruction, to the end proposed. It runs thus: "Man's nature at his birth is virtuous. All are alike in this respect, but subsequent action makes the differences among men; for if one be not instructed, his original nature becomes corrupted, etc." The author then proceeds to state that respect for superiors is the first thing to be inculcated in education; and to illustrate this, he takes examples from the annals of olden times; such as that of master Yung, who, when only four years old, had the politeness to wait till his seniors in the family had helped themselves out of a basket of pears, and then quietly took his own and ate it; and another of a stripling eight years of age, who understood his filial duty so well, that he was in the habit of warming his aged father's bed by first lying in it himself; and so on, while all is clothed in the poetic style, every verse necessarily consisting of three monosyllables and no more. This is the primer of China, the most elementary book in the country. Of course the pupil, while committing it to memory, never understands it. In fact he is not expected to do so, until he has learned by rote a good many other equally unintelligible books. All that is required of him now is, that he learn to call the written characters by the right names.

When he can repeat this book through and through, though he comprehends not a fraction of its meaning, the learner passes on to what are called the *Sz'u-king*, or Four Books, wherein are set forth the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, in terms antiquated and sometimes obsolete, and rather harder to be understood than those of the first-mentioned book. These, too, the lad cannot comprehend for years after he has taken them in hand. He passes over the volumes, gathering up the mere concatenation of sounds which his teacher has told him to attach to the signs he is reading, and thus he learns the Four Books.

In the conversations of Mencius, the boy would find some really fine specimens of acute reasoning, and strong com-

mon sense, if he could master the style, and grapple with the subjects. But the argumentations of Mencius would not be fit for a child's study, even if they were clothed in plainer language. This book, therefore, is but little, if at all, understood till long after the pupil has learned it all by heart.

Shall he take up what are called the *Wû-king*, or Five Classics? Give him the Book of Odes, rehearsed or sung by the people in the earliest times, and expurgated and compiled by Confucius. A more unintelligible set of poems could not be found, for they are not only of very ancient date, but obscure beyond any thing of the kind. Having, however, committed these to memory like the other books, he must next proceed to the *Shu-king*, a book of historical annals, also the work of Confucius, relating to earlier times than any other book extant, except perhaps the Pentateuch. Here he would need all the aid which a critical knowledge of the language could give him, and some science besides, in order to arrive at the meaning; but he must skim over all this historical lore, chiefly interesting for its antiquity, drinking only the froth of words, without tasting their import.

Shall he have the *Yih-king*, or Book of Changes, next? No man, it is presumed, ever yet comprehended the meaning of it, except the author, which indeed renders it doubtful whether this be not conceding too much even to him. The Chinese themselves, while they reverentially retain it among their standard school-books, generally give it up, and pass on to another. So far as we can discover, it is a book purporting to unravel all the mysteries of nature and the decrees of fate by the simplest means in the world, namely, by the arithmetical commutations that can be produced with eight diagrams of straight lines.

After deriving all the benefit he can from this enigmatical work, our Chinese scholar may take up the *Li-ki*, or Record of Rites, that is, the book of ceremonies to be observed, and rules of etiquette to be practiced, in all the relations of life, from those of the monarch to those of the peasant, and from the day of one's birth to the day of one's burial. He will be obliged to treat this volume as he has done all the rest.

Thus furnished, the young student must be favored with the *Tsh'un-tsau*, or the Spring and Autumn Annals, by Confucius, said to be so called because he composed it between the spring and autumn of the same year. It is a historical work relative to his own times and the two hundred years preceding. A dryer morsel could not well be set before one hungering after knowledge. But the young man may console himself with the reflection that this book is the last of the authorized series. If he has read and can repeat *memoriter* all the books which have been enumerated, he is a well schooled man.

Such is the course of instruction to which the youth of China are subjected. These are the means whereby, and this is the mode in which they are educated. The only advance upon what has been described is, that after from four to seven years spent in this way, and in learning to form characters with the pencil, the student goes to another teacher, or to a college, where he is again taken over the same ground, to investigate the meaning of the volumes which he is supposed to have committed to memory, and is taught to write essays and poems upon the themes, and in the style, of the authors to whom he is so much indebted. The utmost that is aimed at in Chinese schools of every grade, is to learn to read and write well. When one has accomplished that, (and it is no slight task,) his education is finished. The schools can carry him no farther.

For the first five or six years, it is a mere parrot-like process. The school-room, which contains from twenty to thirty scholars under one master, is in a constant uproar, except when the pupils are engaged in the practice of penmanship. Each pupil, having read over his task at the dictation of the master, repairs to his own desk, and there reads over the lesson, again and again, at the top of his voice. As all are studying at the same time in the same way, and apparently vieing with each other in the effort to make the loudest noise, the school-room appears to be a scene of profitless confusion. One accustomed to the din needs not to be informed when he is in the neighborhood of a Chinese school-house.

As each pupil commits his task to memory, he goes to the master's desk, and turning his back to him, recites his lesson in the same vociferative manner. Hence, to

repeat *memoriter* is in Chinese phraseology "to back the book."

There is more sense than absurdity in this mode of study, for the character of the school-books is such, that the child cannot cope with either the style or the subjects. He is not, therefore, required to undertake more than he is competent to perform, namely, than to learn the names and tones of the written symbols, until his mind has become somewhat mature. Even this, however, could not be done by reading in silence with the eye, or in a whisper. It requires a loud, distinct, and repeated enunciation of the words, to fix them in the memory. So long as the school-books remain what they are, it would seem that the Chinese have hit upon the only practicable mode of mastering the language, though that mode is for the most part *vox et præterea nihil*. Beyond what is contained in the several books before mentioned, there is no art nor science taught in the schools of China, if we except the rudiments of arithmetic, music, archery, and horsemanship, and other military arts, taught in the colleges. Not even geography enters into the Chinese *curriculum*. It is needless to say that the higher mathematics and philosophy are not taught in the schools. The greatest statesman in the imperial cabinet, if he knows anything whatever of science properly so called, must have obtained his knowledge from some other source. It may be asked, is there not an Astronomical Board at Peking, and an Imperial Observatory? We answer, there is, but the members of that Board are indebted for most of their astronomical science to the labors of the Romish missionaries, who have prepared for them all the scientific works they have. Without this aid, their astronomy would relapse into what was mainly astrology, before the Jesuits provided them with astronomical books. Mathematical works were also prepared by the same missionaries in the Chinese language. But none of these have ever been adopted as school-books. By the order of emperors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the same persons, also, by a net-work of triangulations, determined the latitude and longitude of the cities, towns, and other localities of the empire, and made charts of the country; and yet neither geography nor topography is studied in Chinese schools. The modern maps of China are constructed after the models thus furnished by the Jesuits.

The educational system of China has varied in its details at different epochs, but in its main features it has ever remained the same. In the records of the earliest times we find two sorts of colleges mentioned, the one attached to the residences of the princes, and the other distributed through the districts of the several kingdoms. These institutions extend back to the times of the Hia, Shang, and Tschau dynasties, which commenced respectively in the twenty-fourth, the nineteenth, and the twelfth centuries before Christ. According to the testimony of Mencius, which is supported by the received traditions of all subsequent generations, China had at that early period a complete system of instruction for all classes of the people. Each family had its hall of study; each district, a school; each department, a college; and a higher college existed at each capital. These institutions seem to have served as models to all who have sought to promote public education from that day to this. Every dynasty, native or foreign, has aimed to confirm and perpetuate the power of the system, by training up officers of government in schools where the moral and political maxims of the ancients are assiduously and exclusively inculcated.

Without attempting to trace out the various modifications which the school-system has undergone,\* it will be sufficient to mention the principal features of it, as it now exists, and has existed for more than two hundred years past.

The course of instruction in village-schools has already been spoken of at some length. When we consider the difficulty attending the study of the Chinese language, and the extreme multiplicity of primary schools in the country, it seems surprising that no more of them are supported by the state. At this day, as it was in ancient times, primary instruction is left entirely to the operation of the voluntary principle. Any one may open such a school, and his success will depend entirely upon his skill. The terms of tuition are exceedingly low. In Canton, the fee paid to the master for each pupil would not amount to more than a

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\* This has been done with great care and fidelity, by the late M. Edward Biot, in his *Essai sur l'Histoire de l'Instruction Publique en Chine, et de la Corporation des Lettrés*, Paris, 1847, from which I have drawn the material of this part of my paper, relating to the institutions of the present dynasty in China.

dollar *per annum*. In rural districts, it is less. Parents usually pay by the year, and not for a quarter, or month, as it often happens among more civilized people. There is but one primary school maintained by the government, and that is at Peking, for the sons of Tartar soldiers. The schools are open from 8 o'clock A. M. till noon, and from 2 till 6 o'clock P. M., every day in the year, except during six weeks from the New Year, which is a national holiday. After six or eight years of study in the manner before described, the children learn to read and write with sufficient freedom for the purposes of common life. Under the Sung dynasty, from 960 to 1275, arithmetic was taught in schools especially designed for that purpose; and even parts of mensuration were included in the course of study.

At present, both these are rejected from the course of ordinary instruction. The only school in which the study of arithmetic or mathematics, if it is proper so to call them, is pursued, forms a part of the imperial college at Peking. In shops and counting-houses, the *suán-pán*, or abacus, is the instrument by which the Chinese perform their numerical calculations. In respect to common schools, it is not known that the Mantshus have published any general regulations; and so far as this goes, they are inferior to their predecessors of the Ming dynasty.

The civil administration of each province includes a director of instruction, who is chosen by the emperor himself from the *Hán-lín*, or counsellors of the Board of rites. He has the inspection of the colleges founded and supported by the state, at the chief-places of the departments and districts. The students in these colleges are *Siáu-tsái*, or candidates for the second literary degree. The director of public instruction makes the tour of the province once in two years, and examines the applicants for admission to the colleges; and if admitted, they receive the baccalaureate.

They are examined upon ethics, the Chinese language, ancient and modern, reading, the kind of writing required at the public competitions for degrees, calligraphy, the analysis of some extract from the Four Classics, following a prescribed commentary, composition in the ancient and modern style, and the study of rites and vocal music. The *Siáu-tsái* are also bound to present themselves at the same examination, and answer the questions propounded by the

director, to show that they have kept up their studies since they received their degree. Neglect of this formality is punished with loss of rank, and with having one's name erased from the list. The fact is, however, that at the present day, the college-catalogues are filled with the names of absentees; and as every thing depends upon the result of the examination before the director, the college-professors have little, if any thing to do, and frequently they employ substitutes to look after their sinecures.

The Siáu-tsái, who desire to take the second degree, or to become *Kiu-jin*, must first submit to an examination before the above-mentioned officer, to determine their capacity, and can only present themselves for examination in the province where their family has resided for three generations. This preliminary trial determines how many of the Siáu-tsái are judged capable of examination for the second degree. The examinations for this degree take place at the provincial capital once in three years, though extraordinary ones are occasionally authorized by the Emperor. The candidates for the second degree are examined by two commissioners from the court. A multitude of precautions are adopted at these examinations, to prevent frauds on the part of the candidates and examiners. If any one wishes to know what they are, he may ascertain by consulting the first part of Morrison's Dictionary, under the word *Heo*, where they are mentioned in detail. Of the six or seven thousand candidates at Canton, not more than sixty or seventy are successful.

The general examination for the third degree, by which scholars become *Tsin-sz'*, takes place at Peking once in three years. Only those Kiu-jin who have received civil appointments, are admitted to it. At the appointed time, they betake themselves from all parts of the empire to Peking, with an official certificate of their standing and post in the government. This certificate is handed to the minister of rites; and if it is satisfactory, they are allowed a certain sum of money towards defraying their expenses in coming to the capital. The allowance is, however, altogether too small. For instance, to those who go from Canton to Peking it is about thirty dollars, for a journey of about twelve hundred miles, and the other expenses attendant upon so great a change of latitude, climate, and style of living.



The general examination at Peking is conducted on the same principles, and attended by the same precautions against frauds, as those held in the provinces, for the first and second degrees. The examiners, however, are of a higher order, and are always some of the Hán-lin. The subjects proposed to the candidates, though included under the same heads, are more difficult to treat than those given out at the provincial examinations, and the style of composition must be more pure and elegant. Du Halde informs us that, in the times of the Ming dynasty, three hundred were admitted to the third degree, or doctorate, at each general examination at the capital.

A fourth examination takes place also at Peking, in the imperial palace, for the aspirants to the rank of Hán-lin. The doctors who present themselves on this occasion, devote themselves wholly to literary studies, and do not hold any office under the government. They are examined by the president or vice-president of the Board of rites, which has the general direction of public instruction. A final examination is undergone for the first or second rank among the Hán-lin; and higher than this no subject of his Imperial Majesty can go.

Such is the scale of examinations, established by authority, whereby the Chinese arrive at rank and office. The Kiu-jin are eligible to civil posts in the provinces. Those who continue their literary career, and obtain the doctor's degree, or become Tsin-sz', are fitted to fill the most important offices in the empire, and if they become Hán-lin, they may receive the highest appointments in the gift of the emperor. Still it does not follow, as a matter of course, that those occupying these grades of literary rank secure places in the administration. They are only thereby pronounced by the minister of rites to be fitted for them. The minister of offices may then exercise his own discretion, or caprice, and give them appointments, or pass them by to serve his favorites. This is a vice in the organization of the court, and has been the cause of much complaint. The minister of rites pronounces a man to be competent or worthy to hold office, but cannot confer the appointment upon him. The minister of offices has the appointing power exclusively in his hands.

The Mantshu emperors endeavor to maintain the military spirit among their subjects; and to this end they have also instituted military examinations corresponding to those for literary degrees, and the successful candidates are admitted to equal rank with the Siáu-tsái, Kiu-jin and Tsin-sz'.

The members of the imperial family are also obliged to submit to an examination before being admitted to administrative charges; but this is a mere formality. Frequently, it is said, the essays are written by some other person than the candidate, and the examination is held almost in secret.

Finally, it appears from some state-papers published in 1829-30, in the Peking Gazette, that there are also regular examinations for the post of translators of the Russian or Mantshu into Chinese, attached to the court. Thus the government seems to have made every possible application of the system of competition and examination.

It remains to speak of certain institutions established at Peking, one of which, the Hân-lin, has been frequently mentioned by name. The Hân-lin, or Forest of Pencils, is sometimes called by Europeans the Imperial Academy of Peking, because it is composed of the most learned doctors, or Tsin-sz'. According to the statute that regulates its action and prescribes its duties, its members "are to prepare divers official documents, and write the history of their own times, as well as other works. Its chiefs and its members must devote themselves to the promotion of education among the various classes of the people, and in fine prepare them to hold office, and render them worthy to be presented to the choice of the sovereign." Probably the most important duty devolving upon this body is the superintendence of the public examinations, and the preparation of the history of the reigning dynasty, which is never published till after its close. These official historiographers must have accumulated, during the last two centuries, a vast amount of material for publication in the Imperial Archives. The education of the members of the imperial family is also incidentally a part of the duty of the Hân-lin. The offices of the Hân-lin are equally divided between the Mantshu and the Chinese race.

Inferior to this, is the Imperial College, the Astronomical College, and the Medical College, which form three scientific and literary establishments immediately dependent upon the court.

The Imperial College has three classes of students, called the *Kung-säng*, *Kien-säng*, and *Hio-säng*, of which the first-mentioned is the highest. There are various ways of obtaining admission into this college, which we have not time to specify. Some obtain their places by imperial favor, some by purchase, and others by right of descent from soldiers who distinguished themselves in the Mantshu conquest in 1644. The *Hio-säng* study in their respective languages, the Mantshu, the Mongol, or the Chinese. The other classes, it appears, confine themselves to Chinese literature. The course of study in this college occupies ten years. There is a sort of mathematical school attached to the Imperial College, which the *Kung-säng* and *Kien-säng* can enter, upon examination.

The Astronomical College dates from the time of the Ming dynasty. Its constitution was materially changed by the Roman Catholic missionaries, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But its functions, after all, relate as much to astrology as to astronomy. It is governed by a high officer called a minister. He has under him two prefects or directors, the one a Mantshu, and the other a Chinese, or even an European; and four assistants, a Mantshu, a Chinese, and two Europeans. They determine the laws of the motion of the stars, and regulate the notation of time among men; and in short, every thing that relates to divination, and to the choice of lucky days, forms a part of their duty. The astronomical theories of the Chinese are composed of the knowledge which they acquired of themselves, mixed up with that which they have received from European missionaries. There are astronomers attached to the Imperial Observatory, and special professors who instruct a certain number of pupils, who are, for the most part, the sons of these astronomers.

The preparation of the Imperial Almanac is considered by the Chinese as an affair of the gravest importance; and it seems to have been that which led to the legal introduction of Europeans into the Astronomical College, because the Mantshus and Chinese very often made mistakes in the calendar.

The Medical College can hardly be called a school, for no regular system of study or instruction is attached to the institution. Several of its members are constantly employed

in the service of the emperor and empress, and the imperial family; and when the emperor hears of the illness of a prince or princess, or of a minister of state, he delegates one of his physicians to visit the personage. Medical knowledge in China is acquired solely by practice, and some considerable attainments in this way suffice to introduce one of the profession into the College at the capital.

We have thus taken a cursory survey of the religion, the processes of instruction, and the educational system, established in China, because it contributes to give an insight into the way in which certain remarkable results have been brought about in the national mind and manners.

Confucianism, Buddhism, Táuism and Mohammedanism, but chiefly the first two, have long warred with each other in that country, until the nation, grown weary of strife, has at last settled down into a religious apathy, in which the Confucianist reposes with a superstitious and haughty atheism, the Buddhist slumbers with unthinking idolatry, the disciple of Láu-tsz' dozes with his lazy abstractions, and dreams of the water of immortality, and the follower of Mohammed is quite at ease with his devotions to Allah. No bloody rites, no human sacrifices are seen, for the conflict of various systems of religion has neutralized the strongest points of all, and kept the nation from any but the more decent exhibitions of Pagan devotion.

Again, the long continued confinement of the Chinese to the exclusive study of their old classic books, has taught them to regard that which is most ancient as best and most venerable. We stand with our faces toward the future, looking for a golden age to come. They, on the contrary, with their backs turned to ours, are indolently peering away into remote antiquity, and congratulating themselves on what their fathers were. We think the mind of man is destined to achieve greater things than it has hitherto accomplished. They look to the far off past for all their models of the great, the heroic, and the good.

To the same cause may also be ascribed the early maturity of the civilization of China. The mind of man, there, has been so fully occupied with the task assigned it in the educational course, that it has been effectually prevented from overleaping the boundaries by which it has been for ages circumscribed. It has had so much to do in the mere

study of the standard books, and of the language, that if other and new fields of knowledge had been presented to it, it could not have found time to explore them. But such a diversion was never attempted. Every learner has been shut up to the same studies, and to the same method. While, therefore, on our side of the world, we have been rushing forward in eager haste after new discoveries and inventions, and boldly adventuring all manner of experiments, in politics, religion, science, and the arts, until at length we are scarcely surprised at any thing, the Chinese accomplished all that they could of this sort, long ago, and then sat down at rest within their own domain, content with what they were, and doggedly indifferent to every new thing. The very diversities of natural talent, that might, in other circumstances, by the force of genius, have now and then produced an innovator, or reformer, to start the nation on a new career of improvement, have in China been counteracted, because all minds have been cast in the same mould, and it was impossible for any one to be much in advance of his age. To this, more than to any thing else, is to be attributed the anomalous fixedness of every thing in China. Manners, customs, and even opinions, have been almost equally unvarying from age to age. Even the cut of a coat has not changed for two hundred years. Thus, while one half of mankind is more or less pervaded by the elements of change and improvement, the other half is but the mummy of its antiquity. The Chinese of to-day is in all important respects the Mongol of the Christian era.

The whole aim and scope of the government is to make its subjects peaceable machines; and though the state has taken so much pains to educate the people, it is solely with that view. Nor did a government ever succeed more admirably in its design. It imbues the mind of every child with those principles and sentiments which in their development shall make the man look up to the monarch as to his great and adorable father. In childhood, the subject is taught nothing that shall conflict with, but every thing that shall support and strengthen, the claims of the awe-inspiring despot. In manhood, too, he merely learns more fully to comprehend the same political dogmas, and by every appeal to his self-interest and ambition, is encouraged and stimulated to uphold them. It is no wonder, then, that the throne

is firmly supported; nor is that a misnomer by which the highest literary graduates are generally designated, the Disciples of the Son of heaven. They have been in the emperor's school from first to last, and could but come out his tools and sycophants. Such they are, and such they will be, so long as the system of instruction remains what it is.

There is one fruitful source of influences upon a nation's character, to which allusion has scarcely been made in this paper, namely, the condition of females in China. Aristotle never said a truer thing, than when he remarked, that "if women are by barbarians reduced to the level of slaves, it is because barbarians themselves have never risen to the rank of men, that is, of men fit to govern; and nothing is more ruinous to a state than the defective education of women, since, wherever the institutions respecting one half of the community are faulty, the corruption of that half will gradually taint the whole." Women are regarded in China as in other Pagan countries; only with more respect, in proportion as the Chinese are more civilized than other heathen nations. Still there is no provision made for their education, as there is for the other sex. In Canton, and perhaps in some of the other large cities, there are a few schools for girls, taught by women; and now and then, a woman is heard of who is able to read and write. Generally, however, females are looked upon as unfit subjects of instruction in any thing more than household duties. Those who can read and write are therefore the more remarked, while they live; and the memoirs of learned women are found among the biographies of distinguished men. Doubtless they are the more respected on account of their rarity, for women are generally left to grow up in ignorance. From the commencement of her life, woman is comparatively a despised being. When a son is born, it is a day of rejoicing in the family. When a daughter is born, especially if she is not the first, it is an occasion of more lamentation than joy. She is not greeted with smiles and caresses, when she enters the world. If destined to be brought up as a lady, she is subjected to a painful compression of the feet, which makes her a cripple for life, in order to suit the national taste, and notions of female beauty. The "golden water-lilies," as those small feet are called, are essential to the perfection of a Chinese belle. She is betrothed, proba-

bly in infancy, to some unknown partner for life. The relation which involves in it most of human happiness or misery, is contracted in that country, not by the parties most interested, but by their parents, and without consulting the wishes of the betrothed. It is deemed improper for them to see, much more to speak to, each other before marriage. When the bridal day arrives, at the conclusion of the ceremonies of the wedding, the bride and groom seat themselves at a table, and pledge each other in a cup of wine, and go through the formality of tasting the viands set before them, and this is the first and the last time that the husband and wife eat at the same table. Henceforth, she is to serve her lord. In the most respectable families, the women, (for there is no legal limit to the number of wives a man may have,) are confined to a suite of apartments by themselves. Ladies are never seen abroad, but go out in closed sedans, whenever they pay visits to their female acquaintances. Let the imagination fill up the picture of a woman's life in China. It is little, if any, better than the most abject slavery, with its accompaniments of ignorance and degradation. Such is the condition of the mothers of the land. From them each generation derives its first and deepest impressions. This is the soil in which the "roots of society" are planted, and what must be expected from their growth? When old enough to be transplanted from the nursery to the school, we have seen what change is given them. The subsequent training and instruction which the youth of that country receive, produces no other effect than to make them the fac-similes of their fathers.